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SUBJECT: FREEDOM HOUSE HIGHLIGHTS GEORGIAN PROGRESS ON
DEMOCRATIC REFORMS

¶1. The 2007 Nations in Transit report released this week by Freedom House highlighted significant progress by Georgia in consolidating democratic reforms. Georgia received a "Democracy Score" of 4.68, an improvement from 4.86 in 2006 (Note: Nations in Transit ratings are based on a 1 to 7 scale, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic development and 7 the lowest. End Note). This score -- an 80 percent increase in the gains from 2006 -- underlines advances by the GOG in multiple areas of democratic reform.

¶2. Freedom House praised the ongoing effort toward eliminating electoral fraud as well as legislation adopted before local elections in October 2006 to create a more level playing field for all political parties. The report also applauded the efforts of the government to protect media freedoms, particularly in the regions. In addition, Freedom House lauded the steps taken by the GOG to foster the development of functional and independent local government institutions. The most significant improvement highlighted by the report is in the area of anti-corruption, where the GOG's tough reforms for the public sector are having a sustained positive effect.

¶3. The aggregate findings of the 2007 Nations in Transit report reflect the evolution of democratic institutions, as well as the rule of law firmly taking root in Georgia. To advance the broad agenda of democratic reforms further, Freedom House calls on the GOG to strengthen national governance and increase the independence of the judiciary.
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